

Inside:

what might have been rain

by Dana Bath

Being Photographed

by Graham McKeen

Poetry

by Norma Cole

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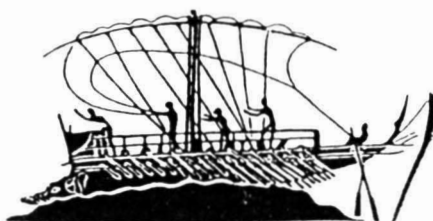
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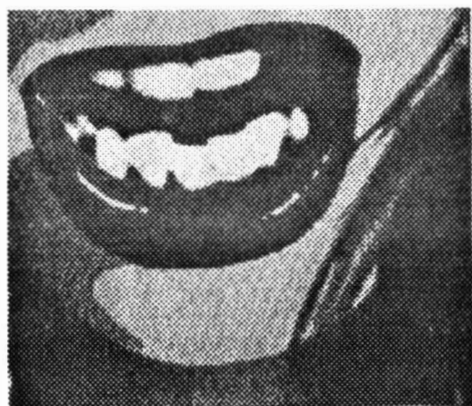


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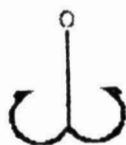


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Bakhtin on Sabbatical

index
editorial

Isaak searches all over for Ursula that night in his dream. A transvestite plays the piano in the corner of a loft party. It is Isaak and Ursula's loft. Ursula had invited the world and now Isaak can no longer find her. He searches everywhere. Strangers sitting on his furniture. Someone is rolling joints in the corner. Isaak searches every face, searches the carnival for her.

Bakhtin is in a corner discussing wine wearing a charcoal suit, hands folded on his knee. He is passed a joint and inhales in a practiced way. He stands up and goes to play the piano, pushing the transvestite aside. Words come out instead of notes. Soaking wet, drowned words in Russian. The piano had been rescued from the sea and Bakhtin conducts his carnival here in the loft before Isaak opens his eyes to the dark.

Bakhtin is becoming tired of his job at the University. He wants perspective, not theory. He is tired of egg salad sandwiches in brown paper bags. He gives his charcoal suit to the Salvation Army and lets his hair grow long and curly. He buys shoes six sizes too large and yellow daisies for his lapel. His nose is thin, too thin for the rubber nose to stay on so he uses an elastic around his head. He

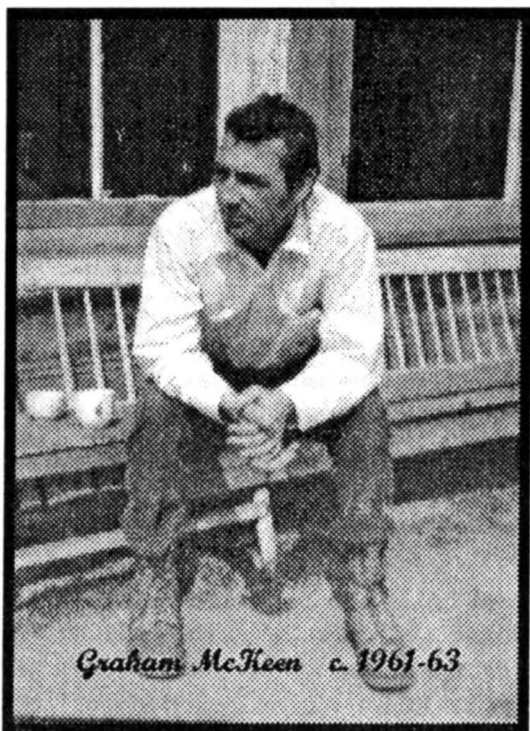
...At the mime school Bakhtin is the star...

stays up late at night practicing his accordion and watching video tapes of The Dick Van Dyke Show. Bakhtin takes a sabbatical from academia to become a clown.

At the mime school Bakhtin is the star. He and his silent wit. He learns all the standards: pulling the rope, in the box and can't get out, heavy object over the head. He impresses the teachers by acting out their dreams for them. He never talks but he carries a notebook around his neck on a string. Clipped to it is a pencil which sometimes goes behind his ear. No one in the mime school writes in it so it remains blank except for Bakhtin's musings on reader response theory, a book by a man named after a trout. Bakhtin may be a mime but he still reads voraciously.

Bakhtin graduates from the mime school with honours and considers going into real estate. He will never get the white mask off of his face. For Isaak, Ursula no longer beside him, this has the effect of mistaking Bakhtin for a ghost every night he continues to dream him.

Andy brown



The following is an excerpt from Graham McKeen's autobiography. Graham cuts a Bukowski figure, with a life lived from the inside of a bottle. The octave of his gravelly voice is a result of a baked potato which lodged in his throat, choking and scalding him. It is a candid document, without apologies, for a life lived on the edge. A storyteller from another time. A hardened barfly and piano player who rubbed shoulders with a variety of people destined for other paths. People with names like: Ginsberg, Liberace, Cohen, Oscar Peterson, Charlie Mills, and Norman Mailer (who has volunteered to write a preface). He speaks frankly of his friends and acquaintances which span the literary, art, and jazz world of Montréal and Greenwich Village in the fifties and sixties.

He tells of saving Jack Kerouac's life and afterwards drinking whiskey in the Cathedral arguing in French about hockey. Later Graham would accompany Kerouac's poetry readings on the piano. Tales of drinking with Dylan Thomas a few weeks before that poet's death. Moving Norman Mailer's furniture and breaking the statue of David. Lost with a slave girl in the Sahara after trading his epilepsy pills for hash. The month missing in his memory spent in Bellevue Sanatorium. His recent reunion with the daughter he never knew he had. Tales of women, emergency wards, and above all, alcohol.

A few years ago Graham quit drinking and received a grant to write this book. He was just released from the hospital (again) where he tells me the piano was out of tune.

Being Photographed

by Graham McKeen

In November, 1960 I was getting restless and growing bored with the Village life. I needed to return home. My girlfriend, Renee, and I decided to take the trip from New York to Montréal. She was nearly six feet tall and had a New York air which made a striking impression on my Canadian friends. She swept into town like she owned it. Local abstract painter, Nancy Petry, and her husband were going on their honeymoon and offered us the use of their apartment while we were staying in Montréal.

A McGill University professor, who knew I was in town again, asked me what I could do about getting Norman Mailer up to the University for a talk to the students. I had met Norman when I moved his furniture one morning in the Village. I remember I broke a small statue of David. His wife was furious at him for giving us unlimited drinks while we were working. Norman and I remain friends to this day. I told the McGill professor that I would try my best to get him to Montréal. I wrote

a long letter to Norman, suggesting the visit.

One night, a week later, Renee and I went to a party given by the photographer John Max. While we were there, an argument started between Renee and I. I was dancing with a petite French-Canadian girl all night and Renee was growing more jealous with every drink. In the kitchen Renee picked up a knife, and threatened me with it. I grabbed a pair of scissors to defend myself, and told her to put the knife down. It was a standoff. She told me to drop the scissors, which I did. As soon as I dropped my weapon, Renee lunged at me with the long thin knife. She had to swing the knife around Max, who was standing in front of her, but she nevertheless managed to hook the blade into my back, just below the left lung. Within seconds, the blood was spurting all over the place.

Things became cloudy and erratic. I was jerking all over the floor with pain. Someone took me to a bed to lie down. Renee was stunned and she looked

regretful.

While I lay on the bed Max had the brilliant idea of taking some photos of the event. He grabbed his camera and was moving around the room. Click. Click. Click. Max was capturing the expressions on my face, the blood was soaking the sheets. I'm sure he was thinking about the way the photos would come out. He was playing with angles, standing over the bed. I had become a show and he was documenting the event.

Renee, recovering from shock, grabbed the phone to call for an ambulance. The tears running down her cheeks, mixing with her mascara, provided a ghastly sight. The two of us were quite a pair. Max took some shots of her on the phone.

In the meantime, I was becoming weaker and weaker by the minute with loss of blood. I thought I was bleeding to death. Finally the Royal Victoria Hospital ambulance arrived and they carried me off. E.R. attendants rushed me into a room and prepared for a blood transfusion. I was still conscious, but weak as a newborn.

A little later, and feeling better, the doctor asked me how it had happened. I told him I had slipped and cut myself on a loose piece of sharp porcelain. The doctor looked at me with his coal black eyes and said, "Mr. McKeen, we're alone here. You can tell me the truth. No one else is going to know. That wasn't from a piece of porcelain, was it? That wound was from a very sharp knife."

I admitted everything to the doctor. I told him that I had lied because I feared for Renee. What would happen to her if the police found out? She could theoretically be held on an attempted murder charge, or at least for assault with a dangerous weapon. I didn't want any of that to happen. She could be deported. It would all turn into an unnecessary mess. I wasn't going to die.

The good doctor understood. "You're a lucky man. Your girlfriend missed piercing your lung by a hair."

He told me not to worry, everything would be kept quiet. In a matter of hours, I left the hospital with Renee, who by this time appeared to be in worse condition than I. We took a taxi, and headed for the Yacht Club in downtown Montréal. A few good shots of whiskey would straighten everything out.

I was a regular there and the bartender knew me. He called me over and said, "Graham, I've got a letter for you." It was from Mailer, and read:

*Graham, thank your McGill professor
friend, but I can't leave the flag for the
moment.*

Cheers, Norman.

Mailer had stabbed his wife, Adele, and was being held for further investigation.

Remaining in Light

So quiet, the second theme
appears first
called recapitulation

no reaction shot, is application
to all such sites of intention

Rembrandt, and your not losing
your place
in the book, the light's violence

and your scrutiny, autopsy's relevance
a morning syntax "imagined" who
reads intention

but if you had been reading
Sappho
as you identify him with light

coming to the end of this something
as you come to identify him with
light

they were trying to recall
we didn't expect to see alders
here

after the red berries in clusters,
edible, etc.
they could break this fall as long
as the rope held

leather straps on his thighs
resembled garters
bright violence says you are hard-
ly this or that

the cold is bright, the woman
might be cold, she may relax

and speak in the dark
imperceptible finitude

experienced as endlessness
its property its illusion

Louise Labé

*Or so it seems long
after, she said, we see how each
living thing did live
when from body subtle life does
leave; if I am body
who are you
or rather where? Or
so she said*

*Don't leave me lifeless for so long.
Saving me
will be too late. She said Wretch
as well and spoke
as well
of danger: give back its part
and half respect*

*And wrote a warning not to
endanger
this meeting and loving keeping
reading
company, not strictness,*

*not harshness but gentle endeavor,
pleasant grace, she said, that
gently give me back
your once Cruel, presently agree-
able beauty*

*

*Two or three times happy the
return
of this bright star, and happier
still
what it chooses to look at.
Let her have her fine day.*

*

It will grow out from the middle

Among which some are after Jean Tortel

One more silence a narrow margin where diagonal green waves are thrown back parallel, translucent as alabaster or the white-green stone from the city of the gods, Teotihuacan. From bright distance nothing is witnessed so nothing is taking place. Night is left or has left a great arc of indeterminate color.

Facilitation means living between words, hesitation means just that, itself, the hesitant hand. Lost or hung up, the difference is being a third of a letter. Plums, then lemons and apples, local, especially lemons. Simply to be close and quiet, beyond grasp so call it light.

This might happen or that. *"Thus one begins to live by poetry."* Boris Pasternak Photographs of the moon landing. That's what struck me. When you can't read, you look at things. The relationship between order and sense. But would they agree on the meaning of the echoes? The world is not the world, the world is not covered. Even so the mind is taken up by the shimmering.

assoumoud

*Once I saw a bride standing in the sand....
Jean Said Makdisi, Beirut Fragments*

Dust on the scales. A smith beating time on an anvil. Rehearsal of the city-state.

The idea was not to leave. Strands of my hair stick to your face, a steeply tiered interior with reflexive freshwater areas at the bottom. To write was to release meaning, concentration could mean resistance.

A strange of mine, he spilled his drink. I took it as a sign. My village was erased from the map.

One crosses the road by the port. After the journey, warm bread covered with thyme and olive oil.

Undo the rules of the game, the green line which is the crossing. Children are tied to their beds so they can't step on the shattered glass in their bare feet.

Turns back the information, a field of colored knots. No summary at all points. Choice or the illusion of choice. The good news, he's not going blind.

Two excerpts from the 'Moirra' section of *Moirra*, by Norma Cole (O Books, 1995, reprinted by permission of Norma Cole)

NORMA COLE is a poet, painter, and translator born and raised in Toronto; she lived in France for several years and moved to San Francisco in 1976; she is in Montreal until May 1996. Her poems, translations, and essays have appeared in many periodicals, including the Canadian journals *Writing* and *Riddle Moon*. She is the author of:

Mace Hill Remap (Moving Letters, Paris, 1988)

Metamorphopsia (Potes & Poets Press, 1988)

It Then, a translation of Danielle Collobert's *Il Donc* (O Books 1989)

My Bird Book (Littoral Books, 1991)

Mars (Listening Chamber, 1994)

Moirra (O Books, 1995)

Contrafact (Potes & Poets Press, 1996)



by Dana Bath

I.OVERTURE

the essential thing is to remember, and I don't. I don't remember if there were houses along that road, or shrouds of palm and bamboo, or a domino chain of warungs and little shops selling sarongs and jute handbags. there must have been houses, because there were children, but they were all wearing little skirts the colour of burgundy wine, and white blouses, so maybe there was a school, and no houses.

remembering is the thing, and what I remember, what I have been remembering since I left Japan, is Beth and the way Beth looked the last time, with her long angular legs and her cropped golden hair and the unrecognition that stretched all the way across the airport. Beth took the hand of some boy and disappeared.

that was a few years ago. in airports I always think of Beth now. I thought of her in Kansai, imagining her going up and down in the glass elevator or standing in line at the moneychanger. of Beth in Denpasar, sitting on the next bench in the blinding afternoon, with the line of taxi stands just visible over her shoulder. when there were no more airports, Beth didn't stop.

(the presence of god in the motorcycles:

whole families ride together, the woman sidesaddle on the back with ankles crossed and feet held carefully, a little boy between his father's legs, a baby on the mother's lap. the streets spit dust.)

now: in an excessively air-conditioned restaurant in Little India in Singapore. Singapore: it is as if someone took a cloth and a pail of warm soapy water and scrubbed the city briskly down, then rinsed it with a hose and dried it with a soft cloth. the damp does not stay after the torrential rains.

II.GREGORY

Gregory came first, that is, the first thing in Indonesia was Gregory, even before Indonesia there was Gregory. we went to Ubud first of all. Gregory was white and travel-sick the whole way, but when we disembarked he insisted on searching for the perfect room, which took as long as the journey from Denpasar itself. the balcony projected into the coconuts and bougainvillea, and there were geckos on the walls. we tied up the army-green mosquito net with some white raffia string, and then we went to find Johanna.

(some of the things I can say about Johanna are: she has a face, and a tongue, and hands.)

(in fact, Gregory wanted to leave Johanna until the morning, but that was because he'd never met her. I called the number, and they gave me another number, and finally I found Johanna's voice with its vowels all confused.)

(Beth's vowels were like that, and her legs were like Johanna's too, from what I can remember.)

Gregory waited. I didn't know him well. I wondered if all I knew of him was something he'd made up. I thought, as I listened into the telephone, that he was inventing this patience. there were hard, uncomplaining lines in his face.

THE FACE

the face is the surface of the body, giving birth to utterance, carnal, the seat of subjecthood, multisurfaced, coloured in danger, an unmistakable witness. the face is cultivated and produced in families, in the schoolyard, all alone in the dark. the face is transformed by silence. anything that passes through it must traverse the body first. the face is excavable, palpable. its most significant topography is the instructions which remain eternally inscribed.

THE TONGUE

the tongue is an extension of the face. the tongue is that place where there is at first no language. the face cannot always take in the tongue. the tongue grows words on its surface. it is a shape made of flesh. the tongue transgresses. it is drenched, numbed, linked. it sometimes rebels against what has been engraved. it is not transformed by silence. it sometimes falls, and sometimes is shoved, into cracked spaces.

THE HAND

the hand, wherein there is always language, is an extension of the face. anything that passes through the hand must traverse the body first. the hand is a shape made of bones, giving birth to utterance. it rips out stitches. it sees through membranes. it contains entrails and adrenaline. in silence, it rests.

I made this trip mostly because I was in love with Gregory. Johanna was simply an enticement, a puzzle. Indonesia was just a backdrop, and still is, even in retrospect. Indonesia is not a character in this story. Singapore might be, if only because it refuses, in all its oppressive comfort and cleanliness, to be silenced.

(the presence of god in the geckos:

they move very quickly. I once owned a jigsaw puzzle of which each piece looked like a gecko, and each piece fitted to each other piece in seven or eight different ways so the only clue was colour.)

later Gregory was still white and ill, which was exactly what was necessary.

III. JOHANNA

before we ran away to Lovina, Johanna and I went to visit the candi at Gunung Kawi. we had to walk down many steps and cross a river. as we were going down, three girls were coming up. they were younger than us, but not much younger, maybe nineteen or twenty, and they were all brown and thin and their faces were brazen and pouting. the first girl had her arm around the waist of the second girl who was holding the hand of the third girl. they were wearing print cotton dresses well above their knees, one blue, one green, one lavender, all with white, all faded. they were holding towels, and one had a basin. they looked at us boldly and without curiosity or concern, and then turned to follow some steps down to the waterfall. we saw them begin to take off their dresses.

(that night, Gregory's blackish eyes had gone cold as he once told me they used to be all the time. I

thought it might be because I didn't keep vigil at his bed that day as he nursed his traveller's diarrhea. he said, "I asked you to come with me so that I could spend this time with you. I don't think you came here to spend this time with me.")

(I did, of course, go there to spend this time with him, because I knew it was the only way to make myself understand. what I wanted to understand is no longer clear to me, but at that time, still warm from the sun over Gunung Kawi, it seemed evident. I had come there to be with Gregory, but Gregory was now cranky and had not seen those girls by the waterfall. I had gone there to have a realization about Gregory, and that evening I decided to have it.)

(the presence of God with a capital G in the silver bracelets:

I didn't go to Kota Gede to buy them. I bought them from the shopping mall on Jalan Malioboro, at the little kiosk next to the California Fried Chicken restaurant. one bracelet is triangular, the other rectangular. all the corners round. together they cost me 48,000 rupiah, about 2,000 yen, about 25 Canadian dollars. the only thing that cost me more was my airplane ticket to Singapore.)

on the beach in Lovina, after we ran away, Johanna and I met two little girls about ten years old who wanted to sell us necklaces made of beads and shells. at first we said no several times, but they pouted very sweetly and would not go away, so we chose a few and bargained with them to see them pout some more. they sat on our bench with us and played with my red hair and told us we were beautiful. one had a Canadian dollar coin and asked us to give her rupiah for it. we said we couldn't use Canadian money in Japan and, besides, didn't she want it as a souvenir? the stupidity of this did not strike us until later.

this was after we ran away. after I decided one night not to go back to the room where Gregory was recovering from what might be dysentery, and got on a bus to Lovina with Johanna instead. faces, tongues, hands, and so on, are not all the same.

the things I do not remember: whether we were coming from or going to, what came before and what came after and the distance between them; whether she screamed, cowered or simply fell; whether it was still raining, or not.

(I am surprised, now, that Beth was everywhere with me even before I saw Johanna in Ubud. maybe it was Johanna's voice on the phone, back in Japan where she was still safely far away and I hadn't taken into account what legs and vowels and other parts of the body can do to one's judgement.)

(there are two parts to my memory of Beth: one is Johanna, the other is Ilse. Johanna is the face, the tongue, the hands, and the legs. Ilse is the hair, the eyes, the cigarettes, and the legs. I don't know if Beth would ever push me into a patch of Indian gooseberry orchids, as Ilse did, or hit a little Javanese school-girl with a jeep in what might have been rain, as Johanna did. I don't know much about Beth any more.)

THE FACE

the face is an element of earth, inclusive, directly knowing the world. it yields to some and is penetrated by some. it merges hidden motives. it is the last part to be colonized. it is definite and external. it sustains itself. it barter. it contains a beginning and an end. it has a hole in the center containing fiery rocks, or a bird's nest, or a tablet. the heat that moves through the body sits in the face like the sun. the face is the outward or forward action. it is a sequence and a morass. it is very unlike an idol. it is a glyph, a consort, and a harbinger.

THE TONGUE

the tongue reaches out and encloses, like a tree or rock walls. like the tortoise, it carries the world on its back. it contains lots of earth. it circles. it has a craft, and requires apprenticeship. it can weave tapestry and string beads. it is a movement of the personality. it regenerates cells. it can be a weapon or a wrench. it is, like an octopus, watery and receptive, and glorious. it is tipped with different symbols. it severs itself. it is without distinctive features. it is an intelligent substance which can fashion the world as dead, alive, or a table to hold spoils. it contains marrow.

THE HAND

the hand is resplendent. it embodies all quests. it is the opening of the voice. it can ask water to flow from the ground for our use. the hand is the place in us that survives. it is a cupule, like the breast marks found in stone. it believes in what is holy and known in one's cells, not one or the other. the hand is sometimes a salamander and sometimes a lion. the hand has roots in the wrist. the hand knows the way to make fire: kindling; harnessing; friction. the hand knows the power of creating systems. it slices. it is sometimes false. the hand stings and puffs with small, contained explosions. it is sometimes a gryphon and sometimes a phoenix. the hand has a chronology and a belly. it can make flour, porridge, amaranth, and sanctuary. it is sometimes a granary, sometimes moon-mad, and sometimes a starfish.

all these objects are functional.

(the presence of god in the orchids:

the Indian gooseberry, or melaka, is a small cream-coloured orchid with a purple heart and purple speckles like rain. there are large clumps of them around the steps leading to the VIP section of the Singapore Orchid Garden. Ilse knocked me into one of those clumps just hours ago, after I childishly called her an Aryan whore because she was planning to abscond to Malaysia with my girlfriend. if she had to knock me into anything, I'm glad it was those. I hope there are still some petals clinging to my hair as I sit here shivering from artificial cold while outside the sun braises Little India.)

in Lovina, Johanna struck an eight-year-old schoolgirl with our rented jeep. it was not Johanna's fault. we were careening in the style of any self-respecting Indonesian driver, and the child saw us--

and we saw ourselves registered on her small, uncertain face--before she darted out into the road. what made her think she could reach the other side before we reached her, is unclear. we did not kill her, and this is all that I remember.

Johanna was simply an echo of Beth, until I saw her with that long straight black hair like a Japanese woman's but nothing like Beth's; with her freckled slim nose nothing like Beth's; with her eyes all warm amber nothing like Beth's. (Gregory knew, somehow, and that was why he wanted to leave Johanna until the morning, leave her as long as possible, as soon as I said Johanna's name something in his mottled face sealed over. he didn't know Johanna then, but he knows some things about me. I'm sitting here in this ridiculously cold restaurant in Singapore's Little India, unable to eat my Vegetables Vindaloo because I'm not nearly as sturdy (of stomach, of palate, of will) as I would like to believe, and I miss the thin stiff muscles on Gregory's arms and the tension in the smile he comes by most easily. I'm wondering, in that futile way, if there is any possible way that I could have stayed with him in Ubud. and there is:) if I had known that Johanna was on her way to something, I might not have come.

but chances are, I would have come. I knew she was on her way to something when we hit that little girl. that was why we couldn't stay. as soon as I saw Ilse, standing in that huge muddyard before the ferry-boat buying a chocolate icecream, I knew that Johanna was on her way to something.

IV. ILSE

Ilse took a bite before she saw us. when she met Johanna's eyes she smiled, and the icecream smuged her chin. she dropped the whole thing into a nearby pail and came toward us.

there are two parts to my memory of Beth. Ilse is the wheat-coloured hair, the pale eyes, and the legs.

and the cigarettes. without wiping the sticky brown smudge (I suspect she wanted it there as I want the orchid petals stuck in my red hair), she pulled a Gudang Garam kretek out of the air and lit it, wafting toward us with the scent of cloves.

(Gregory once gave me a packet of kretek cigarettes. he bought them at a specialty tobacco shop in Osaka. I had told him that I used to buy them for myself in Montreal. Gregory was repulsed and mystified by my smoking habit, but he liked the smell and the expressions on my face that Indonesian clove cigarettes created. I was remembering what kretek cigarettes did to Beth and her face.)

THE FACE

the face lives the most lives the quickest. we can shave a little bit off and fix it while we sleep. the face is rife with multiple negatives and erroneous notions. we sharpen the face with the body.

THE TONGUE

the tongue circumscribes and pervades, distorts and lessens.

THE HAND

the hand unearths.

they were going to Malaysia, Johanna explained. Yogyakarta, Jakarta, Singapore, Malaysia. Johanna did not plan to return to Japan at all. there was nothing to do but go with them. if I took the jeep back, as Johanna suggested, somebody would surely identify it. "But we didn't kill her," I said, "why don't we just go back and tell somebody? Why didn't we just stop?"

it was Ilse that made me understand, not that she spoke. there were looks exchanged. and I realized that Ilse had been waiting here all along. she hadn't come to help Johanna escape from a crime. Johanna hadn't called her while I was in the gas-station toilet and asked her to rescue her because something had gone terribly wrong. Ilse had known to come here all along, because Johanna had been escaping since I grasped at her through the telephone in Ubud, and we hadn't stopped on that road

where there were rice fields, I remember now, and it wasn't raining

because Johanna hadn't wanted Ilse to get on this boat without her.

she moved after, she jumped even, and ran. out of the way, so that we could keep going, so that there was no reason to stop.

(now, in Singapore, I am getting ready to go back to Japan which from here feels like home.)

V. BETH

I always think of Beth in airports, although she never saw me in one.

the essential thing is to remember Beth's face, which looked like this: she had two eyes, which were pale with a suspicion of green like the water at Lovina Beach; and she had a big, turned-up nose; and she was somewhere between vanilla-coloured and brandy-coloured; and her teeth were strong and even; and she often wore her sunshine-coloured hair in a ponytail that sprouted directly from her scalp, until she cut it all off so that she would look more like a boy.

(the presence of god in airports:)

in Kansai there was a glass elevator going up and down, and I saw Beth in it. in Bangkok there was a pharmacy which sold Tiger Balm, and as I was spending my 60 baht I saw Beth across the blue plastic waiting room, cudgeling something on a game machine with a big plastic bat, and laughing. in Denpasar there were taxi stands, and Beth was sitting there in the sun.

(we took the boat and we went to Yogyakarta and found a hotel with a balcony. I went to the air-conditioned shopping mall on Jalan Malioboro and bought a banana split with durian ice cream, which I could not finish, but I sat at the table with smudges on my face for awhile. then I went to the kiosk, next to California Fried Chicken, where there was silver from Kota Gede, and bought two silver bracelets, one triangular, one rectangular.)

(they offered to let me share the bed.)

the essential thing to remember is that when Beth was sixteen and I was nineteen her mother discovered us on the divan in the basement and called my mother to say that she never wanted to see me in her house again. Beth did not cry and she did not get angry. she shrugged and lit one of those

sweet-smelling cigarettes and sometimes she returned my phone calls but she never said very much.

after that, even after I stopped believing I would die from her, boys were safer.

(from Yogya to Jakarta, and all the time I was thinking of Gregory's polished eyes and thinking that I should really be back in Japan by now, I was supposed to begin work again in a few days--the exact frame of time escaped me, dates had become fluid--and watching their faces. their faces were very careful.)

(they almost made it to Singapore without me, and I almost let them, but I didn't want this whole story to be about Indonesia, I didn't want Johanna to be nothing but Indonesia, and so I had to buy an airplane ticket with money I did not have and I had to see one more airport) this time Beth was on the other side of the Plexiglass while we sat in the Transfer Passengers Lounge, she was there not looking at me, her mouth too high for the little intercom--I'd forgotten she was tall--and it became apparent that I was going to Singapore but she was staying here, and that was why I would have to speak to her through a window if I were to speak to her at all (and I had to stand on the stairs and watch Johanna with the face, tongue, hands and legs and Ilse with the hair, eyes, legs and one perfumy cigarette ask for a double room and...and look at me all questions, as if to say, you can visit if you like. and I thought, I'll go home tomorrow, I'll go back to Japan tomorrow, and I followed them)

because I wanted to find Beth in the sum of their parts. but Beth was still back where I came from.

(when I woke up I was in the middle, and each of them looked so long and barely three-dimensional that it was easy to just pick up my things and go out into the rain.)

THE FACE

the essential thing is to remember the face, until you can bear to leave it where it was.

EPILOGUE

(I'm not sure that it was Ilse who pushed me into the patch of Indian gooseberry. she had Beth's hair, the colour of a Canadian one-dollar coin, and Beth's eyes, a bit sleepy and hinted with green like durian ice cream, and Beth's legs, like Johanna's legs, the legs I always wanted to have, and she was holding a cigarette that smelled like Indonesia.)

..... dana bath is a montreal writer struggling with school kids & a novel in a small town in Japan.



reviews

GAVIN MCINNES reviews *GUILLOTINE*



lo-fi poetry

Check The Floor

Golda Fried

self-published ("a wrapped in rags inside my head thing"), 1996

Chapbooks can come across to the reader in any number of ways. Some of them are little books who wish they were big books, *real* books, perfect bound books with shiny covers and a prestigious publisher's imprint and window displays at Coles. Other chapbooks are just what they are, and communicate like intimate letters from an anonymous lover or a good friend. One look at the grainy family snapshot on the cover of *Check The Floor*

puts Golda Fried's new chapbook firmly in the latter category.

Check The Floor's design is deliberately hodge-podge. Some poems appear in one font, some in another; some aren't in any font at all, they're hand-written. The accompanying illustrations are similarly eclectic, ranging from cryptic photos of empty rooms to bits and pieces from *Betty and Veronica* comics and sugar packets. This seemingly-random style nicely compliments Golda Fried's selection of poems, which run the gamut from the haiku-ish 'Jones' to the semi-epic 'marianne and mick.' There's a piece Ms. Fried performed for the 1993 Lolapalooza poetry stage try-outs, and one that appeared in a recent installment of *Looking*

in the *Mirror*. It's all a bit reminiscent of a flea market or a garage sale, and offers itself to browsing. Despite the appearance of miscellaneous number of motifs appear in the poetry collected in *Check The Floor*. For instance: floors, cars, black cars, boyfriends, ex-boyfriends, breakfasts (and related early-morning experiences), bars (and drinking in general), and cigarettes. There's also a sense of ambiguity to some of the poems; the reader feels like an eavesdropper, straining to hear a muffled conversation going on around the corner. At times this ambiguity becomes opacity. Here's 'Jones' in its entirety:

he saw the green grass
all around

the size of his middle finger

One could argue that ambiguity and opacity are prerogatives of the poetic craft, and I'd agree. But I still can't help feeling that the author could sometimes afford to bring the reader a little closer to the action. Fried addresses this issue in 'The Diner':

*you hand me a napkin to write on
you say, write something that you
could put
on the underside of the blinds
go on
you demonstrate
and words come for you like creases
on a tent
but I can't do it —*

She closes the poem with: "I write on eggshells."

Fine. So what can this eggshell writer do? A couple of pieces muse on the lives of rock stars, a device familiar to readers of Lynn Crosbie. Thoughtful and poignant, these rank among my favourites from the collection. There are sketch-portraits of friends, lovers, rivals and family members, often dotted with Fried's trademark bits of vernacular dissonance such as: "this is too harsh," "lucky ducks," and "okay, okay." It's this dissonance, moments of abrupt rhythmic discontinuity, that stayed with me, kept me guessing. Fried's poems are like toddlers discovering their legs: just when you think you know where they're going, they've changed direction, reversed themselves, or simply stopped when you least expected them to.

-Vincent Tinguely

Box Car Love

*Objects Of Love:
Poetry And Sundries In A Box*
Chris Bell
self release, 1996
\$6. Available at danger!

So I wacked out this review on the train on the way back from this weekend in New York. You know what I have to say about reviewing Chris Bell's poetry and sundries in a box on a train from NY City? It's a pain in the ass, that's what. All those postcards and little Ontology blurbs on sticks kept falling all over the place, the mobius bracelet poems were the worst for that. I got one in my soup. Thank god we didn't take the bus. I wanted to write the review on the way down but my squeeze Dez got all weepy from looking at the postcard. It says, It's not the sex I miss so much as the embrace. So the box comes with three of them so you get to make three of your ex's feel crummy about leaving you. Good deal.

We spent Friday night with Dez's sister Josey, who hates me for "ruining" her baby sister. On Saturday we got coke and went to the MET and got knishes to keep our hands warm. Dez likes art. That night we got all dolled up and went to the Klit Klub in Tribeka which was cool except it doesn't have a sign outside the door so went spent forever trying to find it. Then when we were inside the drinks cost way too much and I couldn't really get into it because I kept thinking of this dumb review and so I couldn't keep time with the music. Dez noticed I was feeling blue so she asked me what was up. I told her one of the poems that had stuck in my head:

*If like an autumn tree
I could wash fire through
that which anchors
in me others,
including you
then
I could sleep without death,
through the cold
promise of your return*

*Yes again upon yes
(mutely)*

*(to be formed of leaves, fanning out
across a hill)*

So she got pretty quiet for a while and then asked if this guy Bell always included instructions with his

poems and I told her that they weren't instructions, not to his readers anyway, but that in the book there were descriptions of how he'd presented the poems in his guerilla poetry campaign against the dim and sleepy at McGill. Some of his poems are written on dice that you assemble like origami, some are written to be released in a flight of paper airplanes from PVM.

So what's he trying to prove, Dez asked.

I dunno, I said. I got nervous because she got that look on her face like when she gets intense about something, like a physics problem or some boy she wants to make fall in love with her so she can step on him. Then the dj played "Constant Craving" so we went back to dance.

So afterwards Dez wanted to look at more of his poems but I wouldn't let her. The poems were too good and too sad and I didn't want her getting romantic about this guy. Not that I'm the jealous type. But I like to see my baby happy and judging from his work Bell ain't a happy guy. Superficially maybe the gimmicky fun of his guerrilla projects (haiku cast in jello, poems in party horns) suggests he's this merry prankster, but the guerilla material is only one aspect of *Objects of Love* and even it is touched with the box set's aura of yearning and abandonment. That is not something I want to infect my babalicious Dez. I have my work already cut out for me what with her obsession with Rilke and Dylan Thomas (something I suspect she shares with Bell).

So anyway what do I think of *Objects of Love: Poetry And Sundries In A Box*? Neat toys and lots of simple desperate little love poems. Nice presentation. Uh huh. And, you've maybe heard of Pandora's box? In spite of all the shit it's still got hope in it.

-Daphne D. Arora

Word is

March 8 March 10

The queen of estrogen, Julie Chrysler, presents the **COOLEST GIRL IN THE WORLD CABARET** to celebrate International Women's Day. The featured women performing at this multi-media extravaganza are: Adeena Karasick, Catherine Kidd, Mitsiko, "Titters", comic Angel Cook, and music by Edith's Mission, Martha Wainwright, and Choeur Maha (A thirty woman choir) as well as many others. Get your but off the Plateau and down to *Art Korells Art*, 265 St. Antoine W. in the old port.

This Cabaret is a benefit for the McGill Sexual Assault Center and there is a suggested donation of \$5, but it is a pay what you can event. Open to all genders.

For information call Julie at 281-1052.

On the other side of the coin, it's that tattooed king of testosterone, **Henry Rollins**. Seems as if *Details Magazine's* 1994 *Man of the Year* has temporarily ditched his band and is doing a spoken word tour. According to his press release: "Rollins gets on the mike and deftly weaves his yarns: tales of life on the road and the way sleep deprivation makes everything real neat". Formerly of **Black Flag** and now with his own publishing company, 2.13.61 (his birthday perhaps?), and huge pecs, the big guy will perform at *Theatre Olympia*, 1004 St. Catherine E. at 7:30 pm. Tickets are priced more like a rock concert than a spoken word event at \$15 plus gst. Should definitely be interesting. Call Norsola at 288-7500 for info.

Listings spout

Mar 1

4-6pm

Patrick Nelson lectures on *The Shakespearian Soundscape in the Late 20th Century* in the McGill English Lounge.

Mar 2

9pm

YAWP! at Bistro 4: featuring Andrew Sweeny, Julie Chrysler, Simon, and Martha Wainwright. \$3. Call Jake at 843-6529.

Mar 2

8-11pm

Inobe Productions and Salman Husain present *Que es Diva / What is Diva?* at *Art Korells Art* galleries, 263 St. Antoine W. Pourim Party afterward at *La Huerta*. Call Salman at 279-2031.

Mar 2

9pm

Comic Art Jam / Bande de Cine at *Stornaway* with Underbed, Milken, Broken Girl, Plum Free, Goldfish

and lots of Comic book artists.

Mar 6

7:45pm

McGill's William Lyall Memorial Lecture presents David F. Wright on *The Homosexuality Debate and the Reform of the Church*. At the Presbyterian College, 3495 University.

Mar 6

5:30pm

McGill McDonald Currie Lecture presents Michael Mann on *Fascists*, Leacock Rm 26.

Mar 6

8pm

L'Androgyne presents Bingo against Censorship at *Club Sky*, 1474 St. Catherine's E. This is a Benefit for Little Sister's bookstore in Vancouver who have been fighting Canada Customs over censorship. It is \$1 for a bingo card and there are lots of prizes including cinema passes and plane tickets! For info call 842-4765.

Mar 8

9pm

Coolest Girl in the World Cabaret, a multi-media Extravaganza for International Women's Day. At *Art Korells Art*, 265 St. Antoine W. With Adeena Karasick, Catherine Kidd, Mitsiko, "Titters", Angel Cook, Edith's Mission, Martha Wainwright, and Choeur Maha. Pay what you can. Call Julie Chrysler at 281-1052.

Mar 9

9pm

YAWP! at Bistro 4 with: Golda Fried, Dylan Sometimes, Peter Green, Jen, Pit Pup, and music by Crib Death of the Uncool and Steve Rosenberg. Call Jake at 843-6529.

Mar 10

7:30pm

An evening of spoken word with Henry Rollins at *Theatre Olympia*, 1004 St. Catherine's East. Tickets \$15 (+tax and service). For reservations call 790-1245; for info call 286-

7884.

Mar 14

8-10pm

Storycircle at *Yellow Door*, 3625 Aylmer. Bilingual participation and spectators welcome. \$3. Info: 849-2657.

Mar 14

5:30pm

McGill Friends of the Library presents a lecture by **Dr. Leanoire Lieblein**: *Shakespeare in Quebec*. Leacock, Rm 232.

Mar 19

7pm

McGill Beatty Memorial Lecture presents **Dr. Roger Schank**: *Why Most Schooling is Irrelevant: Computers and the Future of Learning*. At Field House Auditorium, Leacock 132. 398-3992.

Mar 20

5pm

Chaplaincy Service at McGill presents **Dr. Pierre Belanger** on *Science, Faith, and Technology* in the Newman Center. 398-4104.

Mar 20

8pm

Annual General QSPELL meeting for members only at The Atwater Library.

Mar 21

7-8pm

Science fiction writer **Terry Pratchett** signs his books and meets his fans at *Coles*. Info: 849-0301.

Mar 22-24

Join Nebula and Terry Pratchett at *Concept*, A Science fiction Convention held at the Holiday Inn Crown Center Plaza. Call Nebula for info: 932-3930.

Mar 23

9pm

YAWP! at *Bistro 4* with: Heather O'Neill, Leah Raven, Xual Khan, Yannick, and music by Glen Diner and Thelma.

Mar 25

12 noon

Native lesbian poet, **Chrystos** reads from her book, *Firepower* at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, 2170 Bishop.

Mar 26

8:30 pm

Salman Husain and Atif Saddiqi host **Amethyst Tuesday** at *La Huerta*, 1355 St. Catherine east. An eclectic salon des artistes featuring performances, exhibits, dj tobiás,

door diva Mahalia and a cocktail included in the cover of \$5. For info: 279-2031.

Mar 28

8-10pm

Storycircle at *Yellow Door*, 3625 Aylmer. Bilingual participation and spectators welcome. \$3. Info: 849-2657.

Mar 31

9pm

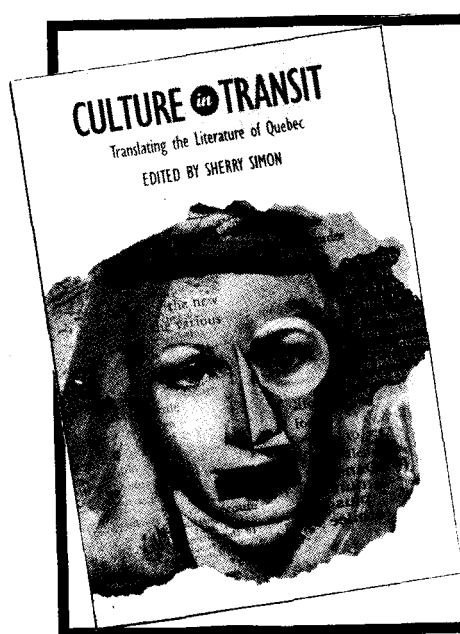
La Vache Enragée: un événement multidisciplinaire avec Mitsiko at *Bistro 4*. 847-8608

IN OTHER WORDS

Mar 26

8pm

index and *public domain* present a reading by san francisco poet, painter, and translator **Norma Cole**, author of many books of poetry, the most recent of which are: *My Bird Book*, *Mars*, and the newly published *Contrafact* and *Moina*. The reading will be hosted by Montreal poet Erin Moure @ *Bistro 4*.



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ARC ARC ARC ARC ARC

Arc, Canada's National Poetry Magazine, invites submissions to its **Poem of the Year Contest**. 1st Prize is \$300; 2nd Prize, \$200; 3rd Prize, \$100. Contest rules are the following: 1) Entry fee is \$22 and includes a two-year subscription to Arc. 2) Entrants may submit up to 4 unpublished poems. 3) Length of each poem must not exceed 100 lines. 4)

Entrant's name, address, and phone number must not appear on the poems, but instead on a separate sheet of paper, which also lists the titles of the poem entered. 5) **Deadline:** entries must be postmarked no later than **June 30, 1996**. 6) No poems will be returned. 7) Winning poems will be published in Arc's Autumn 1996 issue. 8) Address entries to: **Poem of the Year Contest, Arc, P.O. Box 7368, Ottawa, On, K1L 8E4.**

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index
volume 2
number ten
march 1996

Being Photographed
from the autobiography
of

Graham McKeen
4

Poetry
Norma Cole
6

what might have
been rain
Dana Bath
8

Gavin McInnes
reviews Guillotine

Vince Tinguely
reviews Golda Fried,

Daphne D. Arora
reviews Chris Bell.

12-13

Editorial ... 3
Word is ... 14
Listings ... 14-15
Call 4 Submissions &
Classifieds 16